



**Obra Social**  
Fundación "la Caixa"



Alicia Framis, *Welcome to Guantanamo Museum*, 2008

# ***RISK ZONES***

## ***"LA CAIXA" FOUNDATION CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTION***

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Press Dossier

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**CaixaForum Madrid**  
11 February to 3 May 2009

"La Caixa" Community Projects presents a sample of its collection at CaixaForum Madrid. Reflecting on the complex times in which we live, most of these works have never before been exhibited in Spain

## ***Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection***

How does art see the conflicts that are marking our existence in an ever more uncertain and unpredictable world? In what ways are artists and their works affected by the current unsettling scenario, dominated as it is by violence, inequality, social exclusion, isolation and the feeling of vulnerability? The exhibition *Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection* advocates greater awareness of the complex social situation in which we live by presenting works by 14 artists from different generations and backgrounds, which together offer a living discourse on our society. Most of them were created post-2001, a landmark year in the shaping of the new political, social and economic order, and many of them are being shown in Madrid for the first time. Organised by the "la Caixa" Foundation, the show will feature works by Carlos Amorales, Mona Hatoum, Miguel Ángel Ríos, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Adrian Paci, Txomin Badiola, Jana Sterbak, Alicia Framis and Stephen Dean. *Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection* will be open to the public at CaixaForum Madrid until 3 May 2009.

The exhibition *Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection*, curated by Nimfa Bisbe, director of the "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, will be open to the public at CaixaForum Madrid (Paseo del Prado, 36) from 11 February to 3 May 2009.

**Madrid, 10 February 2009.** Today Ricardo Rodríguez-Vita, director of CaixaForum Madrid, and Nimfa Bisbe, director of the "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection, presented the exhibition *Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection*. Hosted by CaixaForum Madrid, the show is a reflection on the reality in which we live and the conflicts that surround us, based on the works by the artists selected.

The "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection is comprised of over 750 works, many of them by leading artists of the past 30 years from different backgrounds and generations, which offer as a whole a portrayal of our world. Since the earliest acquisitions of works of minimalism, *Arte Povera*, Expressionist painting and sculpture in the 1980s, the Collection has assembled a magnificent representation that includes not only the core artists of recent years but also promising newcomers. This task has required a thorough study of contemporary aesthetic development, which is vital for the Collection to maintain its open, innovative spirit.

*Risk Zones* is a result out of "la Caixa" Community Projects' intention to reveal its contemporary art collection in successive exhibitions with different selections of the works making up the Collection, grouped around different artistic subjects, techniques and discourses.

At the same time, and with the aim of making the prestigious "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection better known at an international level, in the last few years exhibitions have been held in different world cities, such as Beijing, Warsaw, Bucharest and, most recently, Lisbon.

### **The artistic view of a globalised society**

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In recent years, art has not ceased to portray the conflicts that mark our existence in an ever more uncertain world. Through their works artists express tough, provocative attitudes to the current unsettling scenario, in which violence, inequality, social exclusion, the isolation of the individual and the feeling of vulnerability have grown to be part of the norm in our society. Moreover, with the prevailing globalisation in the 21st century, this society feels more exposed to risk than ever.

Within this context and aware of their public role, artists feel the need to expand their competences and investigate the conflicts of our world, which is currently convulsed by economic instability, invaded by war rhetoric, conditioned by the

inequalities caused by economic globalisation, threatened by environmental deterioration and jarred by the decay of social structures.

*Risk Zones* focuses on art's role as a stimulus for critical thought on our culture, at a time when, more than ever, it is threatened with being neutralised and exploited as one more consumer product of the society of the spectacle. Certain artists depict world conflicts believing that art can express a social conscience; others display a critical radicalism with humour and irony.

There are those who seek to create sensations to move the viewing public and others who want to elicit critical reactions. These are different stances which, put simply, invite us to muse on questions of our society that concern us and affect our lives. The resulting works do not issue manifestos or denouncements; instead they present a symbolic – and often ambiguous and ironic – view of our environment and of social, economic and cultural transformations.

*Risk Zones* is linked together, as a living discourse about our society, by works from the "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection. The 14 artists who have been chosen are from different generations and background, and yet they all explore and present their vision of society, showing a vast capacity to aesthetically process the complex reality in which we now live.

The works are in different mediums, including painting, video, photography and installation with materials rarely used in art. And yet their common denominator is that most of them were created post-2001 and many will be exhibited in Madrid for the first time.

The featured artists are Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Txomin Badiola, Alicia Framis, Mona Hatoum, Craigie Horsfield, Adrian Paci, Jana Sterbak, Carlos Amorales, Francesco Clemente, Stephen Dean, José Antonio Hernández-Díez, Miguel Ángel Ríos, Ignasi Aballí and Shirin Neshat.

**EIJA-LIISA AHTILA (Hämeenlinna, Finland, 1959)**

***Consolation Service*, 1999**

Dual-screen video projection: 35-mm film transferred to DVD, colour, Dolby Surround Sound, 23 min 40 s. Variable dimensions

In her video works, this Finnish artist combines documentary realism and cinematographic fantasy. Her subjects are universal: human relationships, love, bitterness, jealousy, vulnerability and reconciliation, contemporary human dramas set in specific situations. In *Consolation Service* she depicts a young couple's divorce process on two parallel levels: the literal narration and the reflection of a complex psychological world.

**TXOMIN BADIOLA (Bilbao, 1957)**

***SOS. E3. Life's Servitude and the Nature of Shadows*, 2001**

Video installation, b/w, 4 min 54 s, continuous loop, 250 x 675 x 400 cm

Badiola's reflection focuses on the idea that plastic expression and form can give shape to the complexity of thought in terms of its imprecision, undefinition, and ambiguity. His interest lies not in communicating something but rather in communicating *with someone*. This video installation consists of a projection in a white room, which can only be visually accessed through a small window drilled into one of the walls. The video appears to be a dramatisation of the relation with others, with a clear reference to the Basque identity.

**ADRIAN PACI (Albania, 1969)**

***Centro di Permanenza Temporanea (Centre for Temporary Permanence)*, 2007**

Video projection. Variable dimensions

Much of Adrian Paci's artistic output looks at the problems faced by immigrants, their state of permanent temporality, their displacement and their unmentionable identity. Here the setting is the airport of San José, California where a queue of people are heading for the airplane boarding stairs, while planes take off and land in the background landscape. The title of the video is the Italian term used to refer to the temporary camps set up for the illegal immigrants that arrive on the Italian coasts, a term that implicitly reveals a paradox of meaning between temporary and permanent existence.

**ALICIA FRAMIS (Barcelona, 1967)**

***Welcome to Guantanamo Museum, 2008***

Table with scale models, 8 drawings, logo and audio. Variable dimensions

Alicia Framis proposes converting Guantanamo, the American prison on the island of Cuba, in order to reflect on the current disproportionate trend towards commemorating and preserving the memory of any world event. The museum renderings of the horror of Nazi concentration camps and prisons such as Alcatraz are some examples. Framis poetically raises the question as to whether it is preferable to remember our society's shameful episodes, such as this present-day black hole, or to abandon them to oblivion. In this installation she has collaborated with the author Enrique Vila Matas, who composed the musical order of the 274 names of the Guantanamo inmates, the German singer Blixa Bargeld, whose deep voice penitentially recites them, and the designer Alex Guifreu, who devised the museum typography.

**JANA STERBAK (Czech Republic, 1955)**

***Defence - Psi a Slecna / Defence – Woman with Dogs, 1995***

Video, dress, shoes and aluminium. Variable dimensions

This work is the result of a performance through which the artist offers an allegory of the self-protection of power and its incapacity to connect with the rest of the world. The video shows a woman standing in the centre of a metal structure that acts as a fence. A group of dogs with their masters form a protective circle around her, separating her from the viewing public. The woman begins to sing an aria from Gluck's opera *Paris and Helen*, and the dogs bark their response. The performance concludes with the standard applause by the audience, in an absurd situation that reveals the diva's self-imposed isolation in this cross between a prison and a theatre.

**MONA HATOUM (Beirut, 1952)**

***Mobile Home, 2005-2007***

Various objects and motor

Mona Hatoum is an artist who has personally experienced the Diaspora. Born into a Palestinian family established in Beirut, she was forced to remain in London when, during a visit to that city in 1975, civil war broke out in Lebanon. She decided to study art and, since then, has created an oeuvre charged with political meaning. *Mobile Home* is an installation that evokes loss, exodus and migration. A number of objects are fastened to clotheslines that move them back and forth in a

space bound by two metal barriers. They are objects that could belong to any refugee family from either Zimbabwe or Albania.

**CRAIGIE HORSFIELD (United Kingdom, 1949)**

***Calle Preciados, Madrid, January 2007, 2007***

Photograph on plastic canvas. 408 x 408 cm

*Calle Preciados* is part of Craigie Horsfield's project on the Spanish capital and its inhabitants, in which he portrays anonymous people in large formats, creating a chiaroscuro effect reminiscent of Spanish baroque painting. In these images, the British artist expresses his interest in the relation between the individual and the group, how this relation shapes a community and how individuality is inevitably defined by this relation. As he has explained, "The crowd is one of the major subjects of the modern world. However, despite the idea of the mass as a suppression of individuality, photography restores what every being, even though nameless to us, possesses as an individual".

**MIGUEL ÁNGEL RÍOS (Argentina, 1953)**

***'til Death, 2003***

Triple-screen video projection, 4 min 54 s

By filming the popular Mexican game of *trompos* or tops and through the sensuous movement of these toys, the artist speaks of struggle, power and violence, concepts associated with the idea of survival. This video, a metaphor of the contemporary individual in a world in which war is still one way of relating with the other, was shot in Tepoztlán, Mexico during the *trompos* competitions held there.

**CARLOS AMORALES (Mexico, 1970)**

***Useless Wonder, 2006***

Dual-screen video projection, 8 min

*Useless Wonder* is a dual-screen projection, which combines graphic images of the animal and human worlds with abstract shapes to convey the feeling of ambiguous threat in a world that is about to undergo radical change. Carlos Amorales is one of the most singular creators in the new generation of Mexican artists. He works in sculpture, performance, photography, video and drawing and other disciplines.

**STEPHEN DEAN (France, 1968)**

***Volta (Bandeira), 2002-2003***

Video installation with sound and artist's cloth canvas, 8 min 52 s

Stephen Dean is an artist fascinated by colour as a vital part of life and by the rituals that take place in our society and our culture. In *Volta (Bandeira)*, he captures the catharsis of the audience at a football match. Beneath the colours of immense flags, the people sing, shout and dance with a choreographic movement to the rhythm of trumpets and drums. The video presents an exuberant spectacle that takes on a dimension of collective performance. For viewing *Volta*, the artist has built a space covered with a huge, multi-coloured flag that welcomes the spectator by recreating the sensations of the crowds at Maracaná stadium, where the video was shot.

**FRANCESCO CLEMENTE (Italy, 1952)**

***War, 1988***

Mixed technique on canvas

Francesco Clemente brings back the classic painting tradition by means of a formulation that is valid for the present. *War* is a triptych with broad planes of colour on which simplified elements of a series of figurations appear. The artist makes no attempt to depict a specific war or to narrate a battle. Instead he recalls the universal idea of war, armies, parades, totalitarianism and destruction.

**JOSÉ ANTONIO HERNÁNDEZ-DÍEZ (Venezuela, 1964)**

***The Brotherhood, 1994***

Video installation: skateboards made from pork skin, 3 wooden tables, aluminium bars, 3 monitors and 3 videos, colour, sound, 60 min

Makeshift skateboards made of fried pork skin appear hanging from an aluminium rack by three tables with other skateboards and three video monitors that show three states of the life of the skateboard in the streets of Caracas. As the artist explains, the three viewings can be understood as birth, life and death. The ensemble evokes images of urban life, and also the feeling of bodily degradation conveyed by the skateboards, suggesting numerous interpretations of the contradictions and the anxieties triggered by contemporary life.

**IGNASI ABALLÍ (Barcelona, 1958)**

***Paper Money, 2007***

Shreds of paper money, glass, iron (8 units)

*Paper Money* comprises 8 pictures that at first glance recall the monochrome painting in our art history (from Malevich to Ryman) and which link together a discourse on the absence of value. Each picture has been made from shreds of one same note: €5, €10, €20, €50, €100, €200 and €500, and the eighth picture with a mix of them all, shredded paper that the artist obtained from the Bank of Spain. Aballí has thus created a new reality by recycling the material that society uses and prizes most.

**SHIRIN NESHAT (Iran, 1957)**

***Turbulent, 1998***

Dual-screen video projection, black and white, sound, 9 min 30 s

Variable dimensions

A prize-winner at the 1999 Venice Biennale, *Turbulence* is a video installation consisting of two black and white projections on facing walls of a dark space, in which two singers appear, a man and a woman. With absolute simplicity, Shirin Neshat portrays the Muslim music scene, from which female performers are excluded. At the same time she reflects on gender roles in Iranian society.

# ***Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection***

**11 February to 3 May 2009**

## **CaixaForum Madrid**

Paseo del Prado, 36  
28014 Madrid

## **Opening hours:**

Mondays to Sundays, 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

**Admission free of charge**

## **Information Service**

"la Caixa" Foundation Community Projects

Tel: 902 22 30 40

Mondays to Sundays, 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

[www.lacaixa.es/obrasocial](http://www.lacaixa.es/obrasocial)

**Cover illustration:** Alicia Framis, *Welcome to Guantanamo Museum*, 2008. Installation: 8 black and white prints, scale models, audio, table and vinyl elements. The "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection.

## **For further information:**

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## **Multimedia press release**

<http://premsa.lacaixa.es/obrasocial/>

[www.obrasocial.lacaixa.es](http://www.obrasocial.lacaixa.es)

## **Complementary exhibition activities**

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*Risk Zones. "la Caixa" Foundation Contemporary Art Collection*

### **INVISIBLE DYNAMICS (lecture series)**

CaixaForum Madrid

11 - 25 March 2009

Throughout history, societies have organised knowledge into narratives that told – often partially or self-interestedly – what the world was and what the causal connections between the different processes were. Today, the social and individual structural changes caused by globalising processes make it more difficult for us to understand what is taking place around us. It is a gratifying experience to learn about those less familiar dynamics that nonetheless govern or influence social systems and conducts.

Coordination and introductions by **Helena Tatay**, independent curator

- **ON BIOLOGY**

ON CHEESE AND CITIES: CONCEPTS AND NARRATIVES IN THE REPRESENTATION OF DYNAMIC PROCESSES

By **Ramon Guardans**, scientific advisor to the Ministry of the Environment in Madrid

Wednesday, 11 March at 7:30 p.m.

The perception and response to changes in organisms, cities and ecosystems is mediated by a local integration with countless signs. Consortiums such as our societies have learned to perceive and act on scales that are very remote to individual perception. What is proposed is a critical and creative reflection on the ways of thinking and describing the processes on these remote scales, from cell metabolism to financial markets and the global atmospheric transportation of contaminants.

- **ON CULTURAL INDUSTRIES**

THE GOSSIPING EFFECT: THE MEDIA AND THE RESTRICTION OF OPTIONS

By **George Yúdice**, professor of the American Studies Program at New York University and director of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Wednesday, 18 March at 7:30 p.m.

The gossiping effect practiced by the media drastically reduces programming and thus the different perspectives to which we should be exposed and to which we should be able to respond. We will discuss the strategies now being developed to combat the limitations in the media and those caused by copyright, a problem which in many cases works "invisibly", thus reducing options.

- **ON SOCIOLOGY**

**IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION TODAY**

By **Renata Salecl**, philosopher and sociologist, professor at the London School of Economics.

Wednesday, 25 March at 7:30 p.m.

Post-industrial society touts itself as being post-ideological. Nevertheless, ideology continues to be operative today. People believe in ideas and ideals, even though in the last instance it may seem that they make rational choices. We will examine the underlying unconscious mechanisms in these choices, and how ideology is based on the idea that rational people who do not believe in it nevertheless follow it.